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New St. Louis.

ITS CAUSES, NEEDS, AND DUTIES.

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(SECOND EDITION.)

The recent improvements of St. Louis seem to me to be largely due to the suggestions of domestic and foreign travel. Every year increasing numbers of our citizens visit the chief cities of America and Europe. These tours afford opportunities for intelligent comparison. Formerly the contrasts did not gratify our local pride. It was seen that many smaller cities, both at home and abroad, surpassed St. Louis in the attractiveness and convenience of their public improvements. Doubtless the press had already acquainted these travelers with the facts which they witnessed, but personal observation is more vividly impressive than the most graphic description. The St. Louis tourist may have read of the prosperity of far distant Washington, but when he sees in young Seattle finer rows of buildings than any which a metropolis ten times its size possesses, the startling spectacle suggests unwelcome contrasts. In the earlier years, the statements of the comparatively limited number of our citizens who had seen the superiority of other cities were received with popular distrust; but latterly, when tens of thousands of our population have become familiar with the great cities of the United States and Europe, a spirit of intelligent emulation has actively endeavored to promote the advancement of St. Louis. A general recognition of the needs of this city led to an organized effort to supply them. It was the charm of English pleasure-grounds that suggested to Henry Shaw the creation of our beautiful Tower Grove Park. It was doubtless an observance of the admirable pavement of European capitals that led to the improvement of our streets. The finer structures which now embellish St. Louis are partly attributable to a spirit of competition with rival cities.

But there are historic reasons for the greater readiness with which St. Louis now takes hints. The early French and Spanish residents of St. Louis preferred the enjoyments of leisure to the profits of industry. Indifferent to the luxuries of wealth and the gratifications of ambition, they lived lives of careless ease and social gaiety. After the cession of Louisiana to the United States, slavery fostered a similar inertness. The conditions under which most of our richer classes lived were unfavorable to the development of enterprise. Boys who are reared in habits of entire dependence upon the services of others seldom become men of self-reliant energy. The fact that there were in the slave States many noble examples of public spirit and commercial activity does not disprove the general truth that the love of ease which servitude begets does not promote the development of an independent and resourceful manhood. The luxurious indolence which bondage fostered enervated the masters. Many of our old families brought up under servile institutions were content with the safe enjoyment of their wealth. The influences under which they were reared tended to withhold them from any undertaking that might endanger their fortunes. This lack of enterprise has always been a serious hindrance to the progress of St. Louis. Men of opulence and social position were naturally regarded as popular leaders, and if they failed to aid proposed improvements, the projects were generally abandoned. The faster growth of the States on the same parallel with Missouri can only be ascribed to the greater economic energy which free institutions develop. St. Louis was long benumbed by the torpor of slavery.

But now this lethargy is quickening into vigorous life. A generation has grown up under the inspiring influences of freedom. The emancipation of the slaves was also the enfranchisement of their masters. The discipline of ambitious and self-reliant industry naturally tends to produce men of enterprise and public spirit. The manly training which has freed them from the conservatism that resisted every step of municipal progress prompts them to adopt with alacrity every wise innovation. Actuated by these broader influences, the citizens of St. Louis are now more actively co-operating for the advancement of their municipal interests.

The signs of public progress are agreeably numerous. The improvement of our streets is a gratifying evidence of advancement. In the work of reconstruction, new methods and better materials have been used. No city in any land is better paved than the central portion of St. Louis. Of its 360 miles of pavement, one-quarter has already been rebuilt. On our main business thoroughfares, 45 miles of the old macadam have been supplanted by granite blocks. The progress of reconstruction will be as fast as available funds will permit. The rapid extension of granitoid sidewalks also enhances the elegance and convenience of our avenues. Lines of electric or cable cars run to every part of the city. All of our streets are nightly illuminated with the brilliancy of electric lights. The business houses which the merchants of St. Louis are now erecting would not discredit the great capitals of Europe. The depot which the Terminal Railroad Association is now building in this city will be one of the largest and finest stations in the world. The cost of site and structure will be more than \$1,600,000. Our annual Fair and Exposition are the best in the United States. If the electric splendors of our fall festivities do not equal in extent, they rival in brilliancy the illuminations of Paris. The capitalists of St. Louis are now erecting a hotel on which considerably more than \$1,000,000 will be spent. The amount of our wholesale trade is annually expanding to larger aggregates. St. Louis now makes more than \$10,000,000 worth of boots and shoes a year. In this industry, its rivalry endangers the supremacy of Lynn. Its total annual sales of the products of home and eastern shoe factories amount to nearly \$40,000,000. Our local industries are steadily increasing in number and productive value. In the manufacture of carriages, beer, tobacco, stoves, ranges, stamped ware, and heavy machinery St. Louis stands in the front rank of American cities. The wages of the 86,000 artisans who are now employed in the workshops of this city are about \$50,000,000 a year, and the annual value of our local manufactures are more than \$200,000,000. In 1892, the sales of city real estate were upwards of \$60,000,000, and the total taxable property of St. Louis was \$284,500,000. Last year, the clearances of our banks reached the vast aggregate of \$1,231,570,000. In 1892, the number of buildings erected

in St. Louis was nearly 5,500, and their actual value exceeded \$25,000,000. The total width of the lots on which these structures were built is equal to 570 city blocks. Our municipal records show that a large town is added to this city every year. The preceding figures indicate the metropolitan greatness of St. Louis and the new inspirations that now animate its progress.

Such are a few of the proofs that St. Louis is now keeping step with the march of American progress. The lagging pace of former years has quickened into a vigorous stride. To pass from a discussion of the causes of this awakened energy to a consideration of the best means of utilizing it is a natural transition.

In these days of alert and active competition, commerce needs every facility for its transaction. Our merchants complain of unjust discriminations in railroad freights, and of inadequate terminal accommodations. Men not engaged in mercantile pursuits might perhaps think that the redress of such grievances was the exclusive business of dealers whose interests were directly affected by rates of transportation and promptness of delivery. But whatever injures the commerce of St. Louis impairs the prosperity of each of its citizens. The welfare of every member of this community is measurably dependent upon the success of our commerce and manufactures, and an increase of our municipal wealth promotes the interests of every business man. The vigorous co-operation of our fellow-citizens would soon compel railroad corporations to establish a tariff of equal rates for transportation, and to provide ample terminal facilities.

Sagacity, sound judgment, and an ability to read character are the essential elements of business success, but the keen rivalries of trade force merchants to study minor economies. Mechanical appliances for the cheap transfer of merchandise are no insignificant factors of mercantile thrift. The cost of long drayage is often fatal to profits. Some of our wholesale grocery stores furnish an apt illustration of my meaning. Situated near a trunk line, with a branch track running into the buildings, they can receive or ship produce at the lowest possible cost. In competition with such facilities, houses remote from a railroad would labor under

grave disadvantages. The example of our grocers conveys a hint to all dealers in bulky commodities. They should locate their storehouses near a railroad, and avail themselves of every convenience which steam or electricity affords for the handling of their wares.

An intelligent self-interest will actively encourage the diversification of our manufacturing industries. St. Louis is a natural seat of the productive arts. Situated in the centre of one of the largest and richest valleys in the world, it has, by means of its vast system of tributary rail and river, equal facilities for the cheap importation of fuel and raw materials, and for the easy distribution of the manufactured products. A city in whose immediate vicinity there is found an unlimited abundance of agricultural and mineral resources ought to become a great industrial capital. Manufacturers in every branch of mechanical art ought to be invited to locate their works in the northern suburbs of St. Louis. Attracted by the inducement of cheap sites and by an assurance of municipal fair-dealing, they would be led by larger opportunities for success to establish their factories in this great centre of production and consumption. St. Louis should follow the example of Pullman, and provide economic conveniences for the skilled artisans who are so important factors of its prosperity. Low rents for comfortable houses and cheap fares from home to workshop are deserved encouragements to the artificers who will upbuild the industrial greatness of the city. Agriculture, commerce, and manufactures are the three great sources of material development. If, with an equally efficient co-operation, these wealth-producing elements promote the growth of St. Louis, our city cannot fail to be greatly prosperous. But, in our industrial progress, the conditions of most rapid advancement will not permit manufactures to lag behind her sisters.

Like other western cities that use bituminous coal for fuel, St. Louis has been subject to the annoyance of smoke, but recently an association has been formed for the express purpose of abating this cause of public discomfort. The organization of this company, which includes more than 2,000 of the principal business men of the city, is both an evidence of the progressive spirit of St. Louis and an

assurance that our skies will soon be cleared from the gloom that has been wont to obscure them.

Laclede sagaciously foresaw the possible greatness of the trading-post which he founded, but none of his fellow-colonists, or their immediate successors, were endowed with an equal forecast. Consequently the first streets were better suited to the limited needs of a small French village than to the spacious requirements of a great American metropolis. It is now seemingly impracticable to rectify the pardonable mistakes of the first settlers. Old St. Louis will have to bear the disfigurement of narrow, crooked, and irregular streets. But now it needs little foresight to see that St. Louis is destined to be one of the great cities of the world, and henceforth a repetition of the errors of the early colonists will be inexcusable. The growth of St. Louis will be more rapid in the future than it has been in the past. The total foreign commerce of the United States is now about \$1,800,000,000, but our domestic trade is eighteen times as large. The babe is now born who will live to see the dawn of the twenty-first century. Statisticians, basing their calculations upon a careful study of past rates of increase and making reductions for every probable retardation of growth, have estimated that, in the year 2000, the number of people in the United States will be more than 380,000,000. As the country grows richer, its commercial wants will multiply more rapidly than its population does. But, at the same rate of enlargement, the internal exchanges of the United States will, at the end of the next century, greatly exceed \$300,000,000,000. These enormous aggregates will seem, to minds that have not examined the cautiously exhaustive investigations upon which the figures rest, to be gross exaggerations. But exact statistics, even if attainable, are not essential to my argument. Lessen the amounts to one-third of the preceding estimates, and even then, after a reduction wholly unwarranted by scientific computation, the total population and home trade of the United States will be vast. Of this commerce, St. Louis will enjoy its rightful proportion. With its 16,000 miles of river navigation and its radial lines of railroad to the circumference of the country, this city will be the great commercial centre of the Mississippi Valley. With its natural and artificial facilities for the

distribution of commodities, St. Louis can not evade mercantile greatness. The large manufactories of the East are migrating to the midland valley of the West. In order to save the cost of long transportation, industrial works are following the westward movement of population. The valley which is the center of manufactures, population, and agricultural production cannot fail to be prosperous. In the immense expansion of trade which the needs of increasing millions will cause, St. Louis will actively participate. As it is now certain that this city is destined to become a great metropolis, all of our future improvements ought to contribute to its magnificence. Decoration is not inconsistent with utility. Beauty does not impair the usefulness of streets, parks, or public buildings. The citizens of St. Louis have never fully appreciated the financial value of urban embellishment. Imperial power has lavished scores of millions upon the adornment of Paris and Vienna, and now these beautiful capitals derive a large and permanent revenue from the throngs of travelers who are attracted by their splendor. If our aldermen cannot equal the prodigality of emperors, they can, by the exercise of their municipal authority, do much to prevent the disfigurement and to promote the ornamentation of St. Louis. They can prohibit the erection of manufactories in the residence portion of the city, regulate the width of new streets and prescribe the style of public buildings. They can remove the unsightly telegraph poles that now deform our avenues, and place in subways the electric wires which now endanger the lives of our citizens and obstruct the efficiency of the Fire Department. In efforts to beautify St. Louis, all of its inhabitants ought cordially to join. The attractions of fine hotels and theatres, of elegant public and private edifices, of fairs and expositions, of festivals and pageants, of picturesque and tastefully adorned parks, of broad, clean, well paved, and tree-shaded streets will not only gratify our own citizens, but will also draw to the city such crowds of visitors as will in time repay the cost of the embellishments.

Such are some of the improvements which the new social forces of St. Louis ought to make. Measures so essential to the welfare of the city public spirit and the harmonious co-operation of our citizens and municipal authorities could

easily accomplish. Our trust that they will not prove faithless to their civic duties ought not to be an instance of misplaced confidence.

In all ages, the benefactions of wealth have blessed mankind. The progress of civilization, with all its grand charities and beneficent institutions, is largely due to a philanthropic use of riches. But the pursuit of opulence for its own sake is not an ennobling occupation. Mere commercial success is not a proof of high refinement. But the thoughtful and generous care which the people of St. Louis take of their schools, libraries, art galleries, and institutions of higher learning is a gratifying proof that they do not regard material prosperity as the criterion of true greatness.

St. Louis, July 1, 1893.

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